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ABSTRACT

This study examined the potential of service learning in reform-oriented social studies teacher education, focusing on how service learning influenced one preservice teacher's understanding of social studies as a form of democratic civic education. The preservice teacher's service learning experience was incorporated into his field-placement curriculum. The study involved interviews with the student teacher, on-site observations, assignments and written work, and interviews with the university supervisor. Results indicated that service learning influenced aspects of the student teacher's beliefs and conceptions about teaching, but it did little to further a rethinking of his aims as a social studies practitioner. His success with service learning led him to think more deeply about what counts as meaningful democratic education, gave him a greater sense of his obligation to consider his teaching vis-a-vis the broader social order, and provided first-hand experience in delivering instruction that engaged student interest and fostered critical thinking. Though he believed service learning was his most powerful and effective teaching experience during the semester, he mostly failed to connect what he learned from it to his developing rationale for social studies. (Contains 49 references.) (SM)

SERVICE LEARNING IN STUDENT TEACHING:

"WHAT'S SOCIAL STUDIES *FOR*?"

A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
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SERVICE-LEARNING IN STUDENT TEACHING:

"WHAT'S SOCIAL STUDIES FOR?"

Education for a democratic society has been a powerful, long-standing rationale for the entire public school curriculum, but the idea has special relevance for social studies education. This study examined the extent to which notions of democratic citizenship developed in the personal theory of teaching held by one preservice social studies teacher during a student teaching semester. The research posed the question of whether this beginning teacher's incorporation of service learning into his curriculum would serve as a catalyst to help him develop ideas about the role of social studies and what it means to educate for democratic citizenship. Though he believed service-learning was his most powerful and effective teaching during the semester, this student teacher mostly failed to connect what he learned from service-learning to his developing rationale for social studies. The results raise questions about the possibilities for democratic projects in teacher education and the supports needed to facilitate such work.

INTRODUCTION

The theoretical rationale for service learning, as well as the growing number of success stories of service learning as an educational intervention, suggest possibilities for its use in preservice teacher education, especially by those teacher educators whose work is guided by a commitment to schools as instruments for promoting democratic empowerment. Education for democracy has particular salience for the field of social studies education, since social education theorists have long played up this particular aim as a rationale for the field's inclusion in the modern school curriculum (Marker & Mehlinger, 1992). Though rigorous disagreement about the meaning of the democratic ideal has plagued researchers and teachers of social studies education, the rationale is firmly entrenched in the rhetoric, if not the actual practice, of teaching and learning in social studies. Arguably then, one essential task facing social studies teacher education is to help beginning teachers develop their own defensible and articulate understandings of democratic citizenship education. Yet, this part of the teacher education agenda appears to be easier said than done. At best, research reveals a mixed record of success on this measure (Ross, 1987; Dinkelman, 1999, 2000; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). A more sobering read of the literature on preservice teacher education credits programs with having little influence on the philosophical foundations of beginning teachers as they develop their personal theories of teaching (see Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1981).

Service learning may offer opportunities to address the challenge of teacher education for democracy. Service-learning refers to organized school service experiences that are connected to the academic curriculum, coordinated with actual community needs, structured to provide time for student reflection, designed to extend student learning beyond the school, and directed toward the development of a sense of caring for others (Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform, 1993). The growing research base on both the theory and outcomes of service-learning as a curricular intervention suggest a close fit with the democratic aims put forth by leading social educators since the field's inception. Can service-learning be used by social studies teacher educators as a tool to promote the rationale-building efforts of their

students? This study examines the potential and promise of service-learning in reform-oriented social studies teacher education and is framed by the following research question:

How does service-learning influence the understandings preservice teachers hold of social studies as a form of democratic civic education?

Two student teachers participated in the study. Both used service learning curricula in their high school social studies settings. In this context, their developing perspectives on social studies education were investigated. This paper reports the analysis of the experiences of one of these student teachers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two organizing sets of ideas form the theoretical basis for the research. First is a theory that links notions of social studies as a form of democratic citizenship education with claims about the aims and outcomes of service learning theory. The apparent congruence between the rationales for both social studies and service learning leads to this study's initial research question. As well, this theoretical convergence helps explain part of the framework utilized in shaping the investigation, interpreting data, and generating inferences to explain results. Second is a theory of the activity of teaching that points to the important role played by beliefs and conceptions in learning to teach. Here it is assumed that beliefs and conceptions of the field are integral features of both the process of teacher change and teacher decision making. Thus an important aim of preservice teacher education is to encourage beginning teachers to engage in sustained, deliberate reflection on the constellation of beliefs, attitudes, conceptions, and assumptions underlying their personal theories of teaching (Handal & Lauvas, 1987). In this section, I describe these two theories in order.

Democratic Citizenship and Social Studies Education

The strong relationship between schooling and a democratic social order is not a new idea. Since its inception as a discernable part of the school curriculum, those working in social studies have struggled to shape the idea into a workable rationale that would unify the field. Mainstream social studies foundations work centers on the "three traditions model" (Barr,

Barth, and Shermis, 1978) consisting of social studies for cultural transmission, social studies as social science disciplines, and social studies to promote reflective inquiry. Each tradition favors certain conceptualizations of both the scope and nature of democratic life, and the differences among these views give rise to the particular arguments and recommendations of each camp. Over the past several decades, work rooted in critical, feminist, and post-modern education perspectives has challenged mainstream perspectives on the field. The result is a "radical perspective" (Newmann, 1988) that does not easily fit into the three traditions model. With some exceptions, most of these different intellectual orientations share a general set of common educational commitments, including emphases on decision making (e.g. Engle and Ochoa, 1988); rational deliberation on public issues (e.g. Oliver and Shaver, 1966); active, as opposed to passive, engagement of students in thinking about important social studies content. (NCSS, 1994); and preparation for at least minimal participation in civic life (e.g. Newmann, 1975).

Amidst the disagreements that characterize the field, these common commitments then suggest at least a partial vision of what we might expect to see in the best social studies classrooms. Students should be using their minds well. Students should be actively engaged in challenging assumptions, looking for evidence, and considering alternative viewpoints. Students ought to participate in deliberation about what is meant by democratic civic participation. Unfortunately, there is little evidence that such activity is taking place. In most social studies classrooms, students rarely have the kinds of experiences that might give them practice in developing democratic habits of mind (Goodlad, 1984;Sizer, 1984; McNeil, 1986). For example, students are rarely asked to think critically about public issues (Newmann, 1988). Instead, they mostly memorize facts. They are intellectually passive. They very seldom are challenged to formulate their own original ideas. Students find social studies content disconnected from their own interests and see little value in this part of their school day (Schug, Todd, and Beery, 1984). Furthermore, the research literature documents a wide gulf separating social education theorists at universities from classroom social studies teachers (Leming, 1989). Historically, the former have seen reflection on the democratic foundations of the field as

crucially important, while the latter have viewed rationale-building as peripheral to their concerns (Marker & Mehlinger, 1992; Shaver, 1987). This "two-cultures" thesis may explain some of the divergence between the ideals of democratic education and the reality of teaching and learning in many social studies classrooms.

Arguably, the manner in which beginning social studies teachers are prepared for professional practice must figure into an explanation of why social studies as a school subject has failed to live up to its democratic ideals. Unfortunately, social education research provides few investigations into the ways preservice teacher education helps beginning teachers incorporate the ideas of democratic citizenship education into their developing professional identities. Though recent research has addressed perspectives on democratic citizenship held by practicing social studies teachers (e.g. Anderson, et. al. 1997; Vinson, 1998), this work has not investigated the *development* of these perspectives, and the survey orientation of this work has done little to match perspective development with actual classroom practice. Thus, the question remains-- how can social studies teacher education promote the idea of democratic citizenship in ways that are meaningful to those who are about to enter the profession?

Service Learning

Service-learning provides one possible answer to this question. In theory, the core tenets of service-learning would seem to map well onto the democratic citizenship mission of social studies. The National Service-Learning Cooperative (1998) lists "essential elements" of service-learning, including emphases on academic discipline content, student participation, problem solving, collaboration, diversity, student reflection, and issues and problems drawn from the school or community. Service-learning is an educational innovation that challenges traditional school practices that have come under fire by scholars who stress the link between public schooling and a rich civic life (Battistoni, 1985; Barber, 1992; Goodlad 1996; Fenstermacher, 1997). The aims and purposes of service-learning appear to match much of the agenda mapped out for social studies education by leading scholars (e.g. Oliver and Shaver, 1966; Hunt and Metcalf, 1968; Newmann, 1975) and the field's main professional organization (NCSS, 1994). If

service-learning focuses preservice teachers' attention on real-life community issues and challenges them to help their students participate in civic life, service-learning may provide a rich opportunity for student teachers to directly experience social studies as a form of democratic citizenship education. In turn, this experience could shape their beliefs about what the field has to offer the contemporary school curriculum.

Adding to the strong theoretical rationale for the role of service-learning in citizenship training, there is a growing empirical research base on the positive outcomes of this curricular reform. For example, Donahue (1999) found that preservice English teachers found their use of service-learning posed dilemmas of practice that opened up "an authentic opportunity to appreciate teaching as a political and moral endeavor" (p. 693). Wade (1995) reported that preservice social studies teachers who implemented service learning in their teaching talked about benefits to the community and student motivation. In this research, study participants also developed a greater sense of self-efficacy in the classroom. Similar results are found in research conducted in teacher education and other higher education settings (Root, 1994; Wade & Anderson, 1996; Erickson and Anderson, 1997; Markus, et.al. 1993).

Drawn from both public school and higher education contexts, these practical success stories suggest promising possibilities for the use of service-learning in preservice social studies teacher education. Yet these possibilities have not been investigated with attention to the specific question of influencing beginning social studies teachers to better understand the democratic citizenship mission of their field. This research design targets this shortcoming.

Beliefs, Conceptions, and Learning to Teach

The relationship between service learning and social studies for democratic citizenship education provides the theoretical underpinnings to this study. The research finds a different sort of theoretical basis in a set of assumptions about the role of belief and conceptions in learning to teach and the teacher change process. As Richardson (1996) points out, there has been a marked shift on research in teacher education over the last few decades as interest has turned toward the ways in which beliefs (and related constructs) influence the teacher change

process. In part, this change in emphasis has been sparked by a growing interest among educational researchers in the hermeneutic and naturalistic research traditions and their stress on the complex relationships among teachers' frames of reference and their actions. Of late, case studies of the teacher socialization process have become the most prevalent type of teacher education research. The shift from process-product research designs to more interpretive modes of inquiry has been sparked by increasing acceptance of the simple dictum that context matters (see Zeichner, 1999). One widely accepted feature of the teaching and learning context is the set of beliefs and concepts teachers hold concerning their work.

This research falls in line with this trend toward attempts at understanding the beliefs and intentions that underlie teaching practices. In this study, beliefs are defined in part in the widely accepted sense the term-- as "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true" (Richardson, 1996, p. 103). However, drawing on recent scholarship that suggests the interactive nature of beliefs and actions (e.g. Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Ross, 1987), the intention was to go beyond self-reported statements of ideology and attitude and to connect propositions about education to the activity of teaching and learning to teach. In this sense, beliefs are assumed to have a vitality that influences teacher decision-making.

Closely related to beliefs is the idea of conceptions. As used here, conceptions are synonymous with beliefs except the term does not necessarily imply the same interrelationship with practice. In other words, conceptions are distinct from beliefs in that they may exist as mental understandings on the part of the study participants without necessarily influencing their practices. Furthermore, it is held that both beliefs and conceptions are brought to the teacher education situation by students and are amenable to change, though the degree of amenability is a matter of long-standing debate in the teacher education research community. This investigation is predicated on the notion that understanding the complexities of beliefs and conceptions held by preservice teachers may contribute to more effective efforts to influence teacher development. Teacher decision-making is complex and multi-faceted. Beliefs and

conceptions alone do not explain why teachers make the decisions they do. Yet, there is a theoretical assumption made in this research that the beliefs and concepts that figure into beginning teachers' rationales for their work in a given curricular area are important factors of influence in shaping their practice. In other words, this paper assumes that how beginning teachers answer the question, "What's social studies for?" is important in understanding the instructional decision-making manifest in their current and future practice.

METHODS OF INQUIRY

Because my research question is best investigated in context, as the process under investigation occurs, and honoring the perspectives of the participants, I employed a qualitative case study methodology (Stake, 1995). Two volunteer preservice teachers were selected from a group of 10 preservice students just beginning their student teaching semester at a large Midwestern US research university. Sam was a 22 year old, Euro-American man completing his Bachelor of Arts in History through the University's Liberal Arts School and teaching certification in the School of Education. Betsy was a 22 year old, Euro-American woman, teacher certification student majoring in History and Psychology through the School of Education. These volunteers students taught in the Spring term of 1999 and began that semester with the expectation that they would incorporate service learning into their field-placement curriculum. Both Sam and Betsy student taught at the same high school, Bellwood High School, a mixed race, predominantly working class, large high school in a large Midwestern metropolitan area. This paper provides an analysis of Sam's experience. The report detailing Betsy's experience is forthcoming.

In addition to the typical student teaching program (i.e. university supervision, return-to-campus seminars and related assignments, and cooperating teacher supervision), these student teachers received instruction on the implementation of service learning "modules" in their student teaching settings. This instruction was coordinated by a University faculty member affiliated with the University's Center for Learning through Community Service. Study participants learned the essential elements of service-learning, and they worked collaboratively

with each other in support of their efforts to enact service-service learning in their school settings.

A variety of data were collected, drawn mainly from four sources. The first of these was a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with case study participants at the start, midpoint, and conclusion of the semester. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes. The resulting six interviews provided a rich, in-depth source of data regarding the student teachers' developing perspectives about social studies, identities as teachers, and conceptions of democratic citizenship. The second primary source of data was the researcher's on-site observations of each participant's practice during the student teaching semester. These observations occurred periodically throughout the semester, and with greater frequency during periods when study participants were engaged in implementing their service learning modules. Field notes generated from these observations included both descriptive and reflective material (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) tied to direct observations. The third main data source was the assignments and other written work (e.g. lesson plans and personal correspondence) produced by participants over the course of the two semesters. Finally, the university supervisor charged with overseeing these three student teachers, and their cooperating teachers, were periodically interviewed during the semester.

Data analysis was guided by the naturalistic research paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Emergent themes and topics were identified from the data as they were collected, coded, and frequently reviewed during the semester under study and the following summer. General concepts related to democratic citizenship education, the participants' developing teaching identities, their understanding of the theory and practical dimensions of service learning, and their reasons for instructional decision-making oriented the initial analysis. These conceptual coding categories underwent revision as patterns and themes were derived inductively from subsequent participant responses and other data. Table One lists the key coding categories used in the analysis. In total, fourteen coding categories were derived and used in the analysis. Most of these categories relate directly to the question of rationales, views on social studies, and

beliefs about best practice (both in social studies and in teaching more generally). The final two categories, "curriculum builder," and "social reconstruction" were prompted by particular emphases embedded in the Social Studies Methods class both student teachers took in the prior semester. Study participants collaborated for "member checks" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 314-316) of tentative hypotheses and conclusions, and their responses were carefully considered in the analysis. Though in-process data analysis was an integral part of the study, the most thorough reflection on data took place after the student teaching semester had ended, when notes and other data sources could be read and synthesized in their entirety.

TABLE ONE—CODING CATEGORIES

teacher decision making—what to teach
teacher decision making—how to teach
conceptions of democratic citizenship-- how to teach
conceptions of democratic citizenship-- what to teach
conceptions of social studies
reform orientation
good teaching—generic
good teaching—social studies
methods class influence-- on rationale
methods class influence-- on practical
field influence-- on rationale
field influence-- on practice
curriculum builder
social reconstruction

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

At the end of the semester, the service learning module was viewed by Sam as the most powerful curricula he taught. Sam spoke glowingly of service learning and described how this unit stood apart from the more traditional strategies he employed in his classes. He expressed an interest in making service learning a more central feature of his instructional styles in his own classrooms in years to come. He also identified student-learning outcomes from service learning consistent with the idea's rationale. For example, students were actively engaged, found the subject matter content relevant, learned to take perspectives of others, and developed a greater sense of community. By these measures, service learning seemed to "work." However, the research uncovered little influence of service learning experiences on the understandings Sam held of social studies as a form of democratic civic education. That is, he did not connect the practical benefits of service learning as an instructional process with the theoretical basis of his work as a social studies teacher. In this sense, service learning did not lead to substantial changes in the principles underlying his personal theory of teaching and learning, especially with respect to the field of social studies. In this section, Sam's case is examined in an attempt to discuss his experiences with service learning vis-à-vis his developing rationale for teaching and for teaching social studies.

SAM

Start of the Semester

Sam began his student teaching semester under the supervision of a 30+ year veteran teacher at Bellwood High School. His assignment put him in charge of a sophomore-level Sociology class and a senior-level Government class. With his cooperating teacher, he also helped coordinate a Peer Mediation and Conflict Resolution program/class. Sam described his cooperating teacher as a "great person," a caring teacher who had much to share with him about good teaching. Yet he found her methods of instruction wanting, especially in her social studies classes. According to Sam, her teaching focused on content coverage at the expense of challenging students to think critically. Mostly, Sam was impressed by the way she interacted

with students. From his cooperating teacher, Sam learned about what he described as "the personal side of teaching." In this context, Sam was given mixed autonomy to test out methods and activities that he felt would help his students learn. In his Sociology class, he felt tied to the pace of coverage set by his cooperating teacher. In his Government class however, Sam had only a general outline of topics comprising the curriculum. Decisions about how to teach these various topics were largely his own.

At the beginning of the semester, it was clear that Sam was not relying on a clearly articulated rationale for teaching social studies. This is not to suggest his teaching decisions were baseless. Sam saw himself as someone who was going to shake up conventional patterns of drill-and fill social studies teaching practices. He had a sense that passive content coverage did not represent what he hoped to accomplish, even if he was not very clear (at the start of the semester) about what he did hope to accomplish. However, little of his reform-orientation appeared to be rooted in a vision for the field. As he stated,

I don't have a set in stone rationale, set in stone purposes. I think I know the first step. I know that I'd like to teach history different from how most students learn it. I'd like to teach them things they're not exposed to, maybe not, exposed to learning but haven't learned. As far as setting some rationales, I'm having trouble. Methods has a lot of discussion of democratic education and preparing for democratic citizenship, and I think a lot about that, but whether that's.... it seems like almost too abstract to me. (interview, 1-13-99)

In effect, Sam was firm in the conviction that his teaching ought to encourage active, engaged participation among students. He further believed he had a responsibility to "break through the mythology and show students a different way of seeing things." Such leaning are consistent with dominant rationale-building efforts in social studies education, but Sam's own views were not rooted in that set of ideas. He note, "My rationale is things need to be changed. Now whether that means there's a larger purpose involved—I'm not sure" (interview 1-13-99).

His own teaching identity was connected to the field of social studies, but only marginally. Within the last year, as he started taking education courses, in addition to completing work toward his history major, he began to view himself as a social studies teacher,

rather than a teacher in the generic sense of the term. He claimed, "I can see myself as a social studies teacher mainly because I can't imagine teaching a science class or physical education class" (interview, 1-13-99). Significantly, his education courses led him to see that the act of teaching history is something different from the act of knowing about history. Sam explained, "I realize now that you have to think differently as a teacher, than you do as a student of history.... The real challenge of the teacher is you have to think about how is the best, how am I going to present this" (interview, 1-13-99). Here Sam makes the distinction between what Shulmar (1986) terms "subject matter content knowledge" and "pedagogical content knowledge." Yet the early formation of these disciplinary understandings had not yet expanded into another category of teacher expertise—knowledge of the foundations of particular discipline's inclusion in the curriculum. Stephen's identity as a social studies teacher was not grounded in a sense of the field's underlying aims and purposes.

Not surprising then, Sam's perspective on democratic citizenship education was only partially formulated. He saw the term democracy itself as largely connected to questions of government and voting. He embraced a traditionalist perspective on democracy that emphasized the public sphere, and rejected more expansive notions that view democracy in terms of, for example, "a mode of associated living" (Dewey, 1916). In the United States, he saw a crisis of democracy reflected in meager election participation, hypocritical foreign policy decisions, and a self-interested apathy among citizens. He understood that "America has always put us through as a shining example of democracy and it's not" (interview, 1-13-99). He believed schools had an important role to play in correcting these shortcomings, but he stopped far short of embracing a social reconstructionist position. For example, Sam's vision of the good citizen was one who was "well read, votes well, and maybe tries to influence those around him, but I don't know if good citizens are revolutionary" (interview, 1-13-99). Accordingly, Sam believed that teachers should maintain neutrality as they direct their efforts toward helping students to think critically, analyze a debate, think through various sides of an issue, and responsibly choose a position. Critical thinking was to become a dominant theme

across the semester, and this aim bore some relationship to Sam's conception of democracy. At the start of the semester, Sam had not developed his thinking on this relationship in a way that fed into a rationale for social studies teaching and learning.

If Sam began the semester with a less than fully articulated sense of purpose as a social studies teacher, he did seem clearer on how he might incorporate service learning into his curriculum. In part, his enthusiasm for service learning was rooted in his own experiences with service learning. For a year, he had served as a volunteer in Department of Sociology program called "Project Community," a project Sam claimed built "a lot off the idea of Paulo Friere, the idea that people working in communities to overcome what societal institutions that may be keeping social divisions in place" (interview, 1-13-99). This experience, and early conversations with his students at Bellwood, convinced him that effective service learning must go beyond unreflective single-shot experiences. For example, he was critical of a past service learning project at the high school in which "students spent the night outside acting, pretending, they were homeless... it sounded more like a sleep-over than anything else, you know, light a fire in a trash can and that's supposed to be fun." As he looked forward to his own use of service learning he realized "a part of service learning is realizing that there's limitations to what you can do, and it's always important to keep persistent, that through persistence you're going to make solid changes, either in individuals' lives or helping people in general" (interview 1-13-99). He hoped to develop a project that would accomplish these aims, and he looked forward to several supports in working service learning into his curriculum—the full-time service learning coordinator at Bellwood, the instruction he would receive at the University, and the support of his fellow student teachers at his school. Though he did not believe his cooperating teacher would provide any guidance as he planned and enacted his ideas, at least he believed she was generally supportive of his efforts.

Service Learning Project

Sam gave his second interview for this project in late March, almost three months into his student teaching placement and just two days before he was scheduled to start his service

learning module in his senior-level Government class. These three months of experience in the classroom had taught him a great deal. First, he learned that he could do the work of teaching. While he felt he had a long ways to go before he would be the kind of teacher he wanted to be, he was satisfied with the competency he had shown. With respect to the questions posed by this research, Sam admitted that his rationale for his teaching was no more developed now than it was at the beginning of the term. His interest in challenging students to think critically and actively engage in class activities remained constant, but he had not done any more to connect these ideas to a sense of his underlying purpose. This was certainly true as he considered his underlying purpose as a social studies teacher. He noted that he was reflecting heavily on his role as a teacher, in general, in terms of his ability to "connect with students," and this had little to do with his role as a *social studies* teacher. He noted:

"What I've been doing at Bellwood is dealing with maybe the teacher part, and I haven't been thinking or doing much at all with my [social studies] vision. I've been worrying about how am I going to get through today without having the classroom explode, so maybe I haven't given my vision enough time because I haven't had enough time to think about it" (interview 3-20-99).

Against this backdrop, his Government classed was poised to begin a two-week service learning unit titled, "The Elderly and Democratic Values: Day of Dialogue." Table 2 depicts the day-by-day organization of this piece of curriculum. According to Sam's teaching documents, this unit was intended to address the community needs of "ignorance of elderly issues; stereotypes of the elderly by teenagers and teenagers by the elderly" (notes, 3-22-99). The centerpiece of the unit involved the class going to the Bellwood Senior Center so that students could be paired with and interview senior citizens in the Bellwood community. In part due to administrative pressure to prepare students for the upcoming state assessment of social studies curriculum standards, Sam decided to focus the students' inquiry around four "core democratic values." Yet his plan for this unit also reflected Sam's own views about what counts as powerful teaching, and embedded in these were views of democratic citizenship. He explained, "What we're doing for our service learning project is focusing on equality and the common good... That's what I think of as democratic education" (interview, 3-20-99). Whether inspired by state

curriculum frameworks or his own ideas of meaningful teaching, planning this service learning project directed Sam's attention to the relationship between classroom practice and democratic ideals.

TABLE TWO— "THE ELDERLY AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES"
UNIT PLAN

<u>DAY OF WEEK</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>
Week One—Day One	-- Students worked on one-page "interior monologue" written from perspective of elderly person. -- Whole class discussion of interior monologues, list of concerns on board
Week One—Day Two	-- Worksheet activity using quotes from yesterday's interior monologues -- Small group work connecting elderly concerns to democratic values
Week One—Day Three	-- Bellwood Coordinator of Senior Services visits class to discuss stereotypes of elderly and to provide students with interview tips
Week One—Day Four	-- Model interview performed by two students -- Students work in pairs to develop interview questions -- Students write a journal on expectations of "day of dialogue"
Week Two—Day One	-- "Day of Dialogue" visit to Bellwood Senior Center, interviews
Week Two—Day Two	-- Whole class discussion of visit to Senior Center -- Small group work relating experiences to democratic values -- Teacher describes form essay assignment
Week Two—Days Three and Four	-- Time spent in Media Center researching topic of student's choice related to elderly issues
Week Two—Day Five	-- Time spent in Computer Lab composing the essay's final draft

End of the Semester

At the end of the semester, Sam labeled his service learning project the most valuable teaching he did as a student teacher. On multiple measures, he believed the "Day of Dialogue" unit stood apart from his other curriculum work that semester. According to Sam, this unit sparked student interest, encouraged students to actively participate in activities, and generated a good deal of critical thinking. Moreover, the service learning activity challenged students to think about their community in ways that more traditional curriculum could not. Sam felt students were drawn into the material through their involvement in goal-setting and participation to an extent he had not seen before in his classroom. Clearly, he believed his first attempt at using service learning was a success. The question remains: how did service learning influence his understanding of social studies as a form of democratic citizenship education? The short answer is that it did not. However, as the following section discusses, the answer is a little more complicated than that. Service learning did seem to influence his personal theory of teaching on several issues related to democratic citizenship education. Such an influence did not amount to a reconceptualization of his rationale for teaching social studies. None of these issues, taken alone, led to anything approaching a wholesale transformation of his views on democratic education. But taken together, they signal some promising potential for the use of service learning in democratic teacher education.

If service learning did not lead to an epiphany about democratic citizenship education, at least it did push Sam to see possibilities he might not have seen otherwise. At the start of the semester Sam spoke of teaching for critical thinking and alternative accounts of history. Yet at that early point, these aims were not associated with any conception of democracy. His service learning experience this semester brought to his mind an initial, though hazy, association. Service learning was seen as a tool Sam could use to "show students how community means more than it should, that equality is as essential to democracy as voting, diversity as essential as voting, things like that" (interview, 5-11-99). Sam came to see community as a useful theme

around which to develop to an exploration of democratic values. Only after he taught the service learning unit did he come to this realization. He explained,

What I'm looking at next year is how I might begin the year just talking about community and that's kind of talking about democratic values-- what we picked up midway through the semester. I'm thinking now I should've begun the semester with that-- asking them what their concept of community was, what their concept of democracy is, which you can almost sometime use as a synonym sometimes. And always referring back to that throughout the lessons of the semester. (interview, 5-11-99)

Service learning gave Sam a chance to see his students interact with community members outside of the school building, discuss issues of community life, and discover common interests with a group of people who typically inhabit a social world far removed from their own. In turn, Sam was able to see the theory and rhetoric of democratic education assume a real vitality. Sam noted, "I see service learning can be a first step that leads to a larger step. I see service learning as very practical, but that can lead into something theoretical" (interview, 5-11-99). There was little evidence to suggest that Sam fully took that step toward reshaping his personal theory of teaching, but service learning did put the issue on his agenda.

Service learning also helped Sam to rethink the idea of what he was teaching *for*. That is, early in the semester Steve felt uncomfortable with the idea that his teaching might be construed as form of activism, activism for democracy or for any other social goal. After teaching his service learning project however he began to see that he has considerable influence as a teacher. He explained, "You have a lot of power within your classroom, whether you wanted it or not, and if you can use that power towards a better society then you should always try to do that" (interview, 5-11-99). He stopped short of calling himself an activist, but he continued that he now felt "much more inclined in that direction, which is strange." Service learning was helpful in promoting this change in belief because he saw firsthand that, as a teacher, his actions could promote "very positive things as far as social change goes." He explained the evolution of his thinking,

As I was planning the service learning project, I didn't think, "Oh, I'm going to do this because I want to show them how we can change society. My main thing was, I think it's important to get out into the community and this is going to help

student interest... more practical concerns than theoretical concerns. (interview, 5-11-99)

In other words, he went into the service learning experience thinking that service learning was a novel technique for making the curriculum relevant to his students, as a means to spark student interest. He came out of the experience thinking more deeply about his role as an educator in relation to the broader social conditions of schooling. He ended with a clearer sense that there was a larger purpose to his teaching than individual students learning in his classroom.

Sam's service learning unit yielded a third benefit related to democratic citizenship education. He experienced powerful teaching. In turn, he acquired firsthand knowledge of what good teaching can accomplish. He learned that the high ideals trumpeted in his social studies methods class, and elsewhere in his teacher education program, were not only possible, but possible in *his* classroom. He began the semester knowing that he wanted to foster critical thinking, encourage deliberation on alternative viewpoints, and show students that history/social studies is interesting. What he did not know was whether he would be successful in reaching these aims. His service learning unit allowed him to taste success. Furthermore, he came to link the ideas of democratic citizenship education and rational deliberation, "I just think when you are talking about democratic education, critical thinking as to be assumed" (interview, 5-11-99) Most importantly, critical thinking and democratic education did not simply come to his mind as theoretical constructs:

They developed more concretely in that I know how to do it more. I mean I've always thought, "Oh, that'd be great to teach a more complete view of history." I just can't tell students, "OK, this is what happened before Columbus arrived, isn't that interesting?" They're not going to remember that for twenty minutes. Now, throughout the semester, I've developed ideas on how to do that. (interview, 5-11-99).

For obvious reasons, developing a concrete sense of how to practically engage students in thoughtful deliberation is of no small consequence in the professional socialization of a beginning teacher. However it warrants stressing that acquiring practical competence is a crucially important step in developing theoretical competence, especially when teachers are

gaining their first exposure to classrooms. Knowing that good teaching is possible, via firsthand experience, frees up space for reflection on the foundations of best practice. Student teachers can move from the what's of teaching to the why's of teaching. The survival-mode in which some student teachers operate precludes their reflection on the philosophical underpinnings of their teaching. In this sense, Sam's service learning unit aided his, albeit limited, attempts to work out a more sophisticated vision behind his work as a teacher.

Despite these valuable pieces of the puzzle, the whole picture-- a defensible rationale for Sam's work as a social studies teacher-- remained elusive. Service learning did not lead to the development of a clearer sense of democratic citizenship education, nor did service learning appear valuable in helping Sam craft his own identity as a social studies teacher. He had a view of the purpose of schooling: "...getting people to think critically, to analyze their world and be able to think things out, to not necessarily believe what everyone else believes, that kind of idea" (interview 5-11-99). But this view was unrelated to social studies. If anything, his experience as a student teacher diverted his attention from the field of social studies. He explained:

I haven't had a radical shift in what I thought about social studies... I now see myself as a teacher first and a social studies teacher second, which is a change because at the beginning of the semester, I saw myself as a social studies teacher. (interview, 5-11-99)

He admitted he had not "really considered the personal side of teaching" before student teaching. "There's much more to being a teacher than the curriculum parts," Steve noted, "the part where I probably need to improve on the most is connecting with students on a more personal level" (interview, 3-20-99). In the wake of this realization, the extent to which he maintained his initial disciplinary connections to social studies was diminished. At the end of the semester, he believed that good teaching was less a matter of possessing a passion for a particular discipline, and more a matter of connecting with students. As he explained:

When I first went in, I thought, "What I really love is teaching history." And now it's just I can teach anything... You shouldn't teach one class one way and

another class another way. You should be able to teach any class that way.
(interview, 5-11-99)

Whatever push service learning provided towards a clearer articulation of Steve's understanding of democratic citizenship education ultimately fell short. His instructional decision-making reflected this absence of a foundation. In planning learning activities and deciding on particular content, Sam asked himself, "Why am I teaching this? Why would students find this interesting" (interview, 5-11-99)? He continued, "As far as democratic values, building ideas of community, which is one idea that really kind of popped up this semester, I'm not thinking of a larger vision." Here, student interest becomes the litmus test. Will the lesson plan connect with students? Certainly, student interest must be a *part* of what teachers consider as they make the many decisions they face. But what sort of guide does student interest, by itself, provide when one is faced with selecting among the seemingly endless content (and methods) choices facing social studies teachers? Sam ended his student teaching semester having made little progress on a social studies rationale that would provide more direction, despite his success with service learning. He concluded, "I don't think it [service learning] helped me figure out what social studies is because, as I mentioned, I'm not clear on it yet."

CONCLUSION

The very idea of public education in the United States can trace its roots back to notions of a strong relationship between schooling and democracy (Soder, 1996; Goodlad & McMannon, 1997). This relationship is played up more in writings about social studies than in scholarship on any other curriculum area (see Parker, 1996). Though deep, persistent disagreements exist over exactly what constitutes the best form of education for democratic citizenship (Marker & Mehlinger, 19??), there is some unanimity of opinion that social studies, as currently practiced, is not meeting its mission. Few would argue with the idea that preservice teacher education programs have a significant role to play in influencing the dominant forms of instruction students receive in their social studies classrooms. Yet very little is known about how

beginning social studies teachers view the aim of democratic citizenship as they leave preservice programs; nor is much known about the teacher education experiences that are effective in influencing beginning teachers in this regard (Adler, 1991; Armento, 1996). This research sought to address this knowledge gap by looking at the extent to which the use of service learning by a student teacher influenced his understanding of democratic citizenship education as a foundation for social studies teaching and learning.

The results suggest that service learning influenced aspects of this beginning teacher's beliefs and conceptions about teaching but did little to further a rethinking of his aims as a social studies practitioner. Sam's success with his service learning unit led him to think more deeply about what counts as meaningful democratic education, gave him a greater sense of his obligation to consider his teaching vis-à-vis the broader social order, and provided a first-hand experience in delivering instruction that engaged student interest and fostered critical thinking. Democratic citizenship was a provocative, though not dominant, thought on his mind throughout the semester, especially during and after his service learning unit. On the other hand, the idea of a social studies rationale was not a pressing concern for Sam. His thinking about what he accomplished with service learning never gelled into a form that could be called an articulated vision. For these reasons, the research does not yield a conclusive answer to its research question. The results suggest a mixed answer that might be interpreted pessimistically.

Yet another interpretation is possible. The benefits of service learning in this case suggest possible directions for both teacher education research and practice. The ways in which Sam's service learning did influence his beliefs and conceptions about teaching raise interesting questions. In this sense, Sam's student teaching experience opened up opportunities that likely would not have existed without service learning. How might these opportunities be mined, cultivated, and directed toward different ends? What forms of support could have been provided to Sam as he reflected on matters of social studies rationales and democratic citizenship? By Sam's own admission, he was given little encouragement to think about these

concerns from his cooperating teacher, university supervisor, or peers. In fact, his own participation in this research represented the most valuable forum in which he found a place to systematically reflect on issues related to the study. Sam noted, "[Study participation] made me think about what I was doing a lot more than most student teachers from my methods class were... I'm guessing they have a vague idea of social studies, and they haven't really pursued it more" (interview, 5-11-99).

Perhaps then the most powerful set of questions arising from the results of this study deal with the issue of supports. To harness the potential of service learning, what structures and processes need to be in place in order to scaffold student teacher reflection around social studies rationales? One wonders how Sam's thinking might have evolved had there been encouragement to think about rationales apart from just his participation in this study. For example, what if he had experienced a collaborative relationship with a cooperating teacher who valued inquiry into the foundations of practice? What more would have been added by a university supervisor who understood the supervisory role to include support for rationale-building efforts? Research on effective student teaching experiences indicates the ways in which active mentoring provided by both cooperating and university teachers positively enhances opportunities for student teachers to learn about teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987; Cochran-Smith, 1991; Borko & Mayfield, 1995). In the absence of such support, the student teacher is left to reflect on underlying purposes for teaching individually, if at all. Clearly, service learning influenced how Sam thought about important conceptions related to rationale-building. More was needed to help him develop and incorporate these conceptions into a coherent system of beliefs that would inform the decisions he made as a social studies teacher.

If social studies is going to improve its record as a form of democratic citizenship education, teacher education must help beginning teachers cultivate personal theories of teaching that make sense of what it means to educate for democracy. Sam began student teaching with a reform-orientation and a desire to challenge students to think critically about

social studies content. In this sense, Sam was starting with a powerful base upon which to build. Service learning added more to this base. Further research may provide ideas about how teacher education might help beginning teachers like Sam leave student teaching with a clearer understanding of what they are teaching social studies *for*. Though this accomplishment would be only one part of what is needed to change the way social studies is taught, the value of this agenda calls for greater attention to the relationship between what teachers believe about their field and what they do in practice.

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